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Exhibitions at Chicago Galleries

By EVELYN MARIE STUART

FEW Chicagoans in general appreciate the fact that in their very midst is located one of the strongest institutions of its kind in the country, a center of social, educational and musical activities of every kind, the Art Institute. It might seem that its advantages are in some measure recognized for the annual attendance totals approximately 1,000,000, representing a much larger throng of visitors than crosses the threshold of any similar gallery in the country. This is as it should be, for the Institute collections are well worthy the attention of any visitor, in some instances eclipsing those of all other American or foreign galleries. This is true of the Barbizon School collection in the Field room, which Frenchmen admit is larger, better chosen and more representative than is any assemblage of works by these men in their native land.

The Inness collection in the Butler room is also unsurpassed in any other public or private gallery. It is probably the most valuable gathering of American paintings in the world. The collection of American art in general is also larger and more valuable than can be found in other museums and is growing yearly through the activities of the Friends of American Art. The Demidoff collection of old masters, which was the first permanent acquisition of the Institute in 1890, secured at a price of \$206,000, is an unusual collection of priceless masterpieces which would be valued at five times its purchase price by any gallery in the old world. Two hundred thousand dollars has been refused for Rembrandt's "Portrait of a Girl" alone and several of the paintings in the old masters' room are easily worth in the neighborhood of \$100,000. No one who lives or visits in Chicago should fail

to become acquainted with these valuable collections at the Institute, a knowledge of which is an addition to one's education.

In addition to this the Institute is a meeting place for twenty-five or thirty organizations having civic improvement or æsthetic culture as their avowed end. Its series of lectures and concerts in Fullerton Hall offer entertainment of the highest class and information on artistic themes, provided by artists and authorities in these matters.

The transient exhibitions at the Institute are most interesting and if followed will afford an excellent idea of the condition and progress of art in the world today. They are an inspiration to those who love the beautiful and who desire to uplift the world by adding to its wealth of beauty through the works of their own hands or through an adequate appreciation and encouragement of the works of others.

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THE exhibition of French and Belgian art from the great California Exposition was scheduled as one of the big events of the year at the Art Institute. It was indeed worthy of the serious consideration and patronage of the Chicago public, although not quite up to the mark of its own greatest possibilities, since many of the best things which it should have comprised were not shown in Chicago. This would seem to have been a great mistake inasmuch as Chicago is the second city in the United States and the Art Institute the most numerously attended museum in the country.

Among the exhibits there were many very fine things and as a whole it was brilliant and sparkling. It offered a long desired opportunity to compare American art with that of the

lands across the sea, nor was the comparison odious to American art lovers for, without disparagement to our guests, it might be remarked that the exhibition of American art which had just preceded theirs did not suffer by contrast. The French paintings showed considerable vivacity and individuality and the Belgian offerings were notable for very fine and accurate drawing, something which cannot be said of all schools. Recalling the exhibition of American art one reflected again upon its quiet sincerity and felt that our native school stood high among its cotemporaries.

In the works of some of the more daring Frenchmen it was easy to recognize the model and inspiration of many of our native eccentric painters. France seems to be a country where the novel and exciting is hailed with pleasure, if only for the reason that it excites discussion and attracts attention to the subject of art. It were well, however, if American critics and artists would learn to distinguish between the works which are admitted to Paris exhibitions for this purpose and those which are hung for their solid merits as real works of art. It would appear that advertising is not essentially an invention of modern American commercialism and that those who arrange exhibitions in the world's art center are very much awake to the advertising value of those works which attract press comment. To give them their just dues they are also generous and broadminded in admitting the possibilities of many points of view, and for that reason works find their way into French exhibitions which are valuable only as representing the peculiar points of view of certain schools.

The works in the exhibition under consideration, however, were very well selected, comprising little if anything of the sensational and representing the best men in every school of modern France.

Among these might be mentioned Gaston Balande, whose work entitled "The May Pole" was a singularly attractive picture with agreeable spottings of light and dark color; Paul Albert Besnard, whose contributions almost entirely filled one room and with one exception represented his Indian period. The exception

was the head of a gypsy from his Spanish period which is now considered by critics to have been the most brilliant of his career. The late Bernard Boutet de Monvel was represented with two important canvases and the Knoedler Galleries loaned two of the work of Jean-Charles Cazin. A little picture entitled "The Ballet Slipper," by Pierre Carrier-Belleuse, was much admired for its beautiful coloring and exquisite finish. Gaston Le Touche contributed two canvases, one representing his former and the other his latter period, the choice between them being largely a matter of taste. Henri Lerolle, whose works have been admitted to the Luxembourg, showed a charming landscape entitled "A Rosy Morning," sweet with the freshness of youth and dawn and spring. Henri Martin won the consideration of artists with his large sunlit composition entitled "The Lovers." Durand-Ruel loaned canvases by Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir to uphold the traditions of the great impressionists.

Among the Belgian artists Herman Richir was highly commended for his "Red Shawl" in which eleven shades of red were harmoniously handled. Ranked as first of the Belgians is Gil soul, whose five canvases showed a great range of handling and technique. Theodore van Rysselberghe is another talented man of this unfortunate country whose three canvases in this exhibition attracted much attention. Albert Baertsoen in his painting entitled "Mining Country Under the Snow, Liege," awakened memories of a recent heroic event and gave a glimpse of a smoking factory town in the regions invaded by the Germans. Very remarkable in color was the work of Camille-Nicholas Lambert entitled "Twilight at Sea." Franck-Antoine Bail in his "Kitchens in the Castle of Fleury-en-Bierre" recalled many of the best traditions of the old Flemish school.

During the exhibition two sales were made, one of a work by Leon-Charles Cannicconi entitled "Corsiccan Peasants Starting for the Ferie" and the other of a work entitled "Fête at the House of the Marquise of Venice" by Albert Truchet. From Chicago this exhibition leaves for St. Louis and thence upon a tour to six other cities whose museums have invited it.

LOVERS of rare old prints found an extraordinary opportunity to indulge their fancy at the exhibition in Ackermann's Michigan Avenue establishment during the latter part of the month just passed. The



CROSSING THE BROOK Engraved by W. Say
Painted by H. Thompson
—Courtesy Arthur Ackermann & Son, Chicago

greatest names of the greatest period of English engraving adorned the margins of the lovely works which lined the wall and which gave every evidence to the eye of the expert of being most superior specimens of this branch of art. They were indeed authenticated as first proofs from the most famous plates and in addition to this were in a rare state of preservation. Even the wide margins were in their original untrimmed condition, a thing not to be expected in old English prints which very often have been cut down in framing.

English engravings of the Georgian and Victorian periods are among the most delight-

ful of the print collector's treasures. The earlier ones are often touched with the grace of Romney, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Lawrence and their lesser contemporaries who made their day famous for exquisitely graceful portraiture. Often these engravings from old paintings seem even lovelier, more refined and elegant than the originals and this because the engravers were sometimes men whose technique was superior to that of the painters of their day. Samuel Cousins, the great mezzotint engraver of the Mid-Victorian era, was another such a man who often made a more delightful work of a print than the original painting had been.

Genius seems to assert itself in groups for no one can have failed to have observed how at some periods in history several men of surpassing ability or an entire school of gifted artists appears, while other periods are almost barren of great names. The period in English art during which these prints were engraved was prolific of master engravers as well as of painters and their works are therefore things of great beauty and value. No one familiar with prints can have escaped the



A BACCHANTE Engraved by J. R. Smith
After Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds
—Courtesy Arthur Ackermann & Son, Chicago

transcendent charm of the best English examples. Their very affectations render them but the lovelier, for here, through line and mass and color, in the assemblance of dream life, if not of real life, are the delicate, exquisite and gentle heroines of early English novels. Mincing and prim they may be, but they are lovely and graceful, dainty and adorable, perfect products of the correct training of their day with all its arts and graces.

There are heroines from historical romance, too, sometimes not so conventional in their training or in their lives and loves, who, nevertheless, have been gallantly presented by the art of their day with the utmost refinement of fascination. Lady Hamilton's roguish face peeps out from more than one old masterpiece of the period and always it is her beauty, her taste, her charm that canvas or plate have rendered immortal. In the study of this charmer as "A Bacchante," a fine first impression from a plate engraved by J. R. Smith after a painting by Reynolds, she seems almost innocently mischievous.

Mrs. Siddons, of sombre and tragic tradition, looks out in a softened aspect from an engraving by P. W. Tompkins after a drawing by Downman. Her eyes are wide and mournful, her face pensive but she is not the queen of tragedy which some cotemporary artists have striven to represent her. This Tompkins, by the way, was a pupil of the great Bartolozzi and his engraving of Mrs. Siddons is one of the series of three similar in size and style. Miss Farren, a cotemporary theatrical favorite, is a second study in this series, also drawn by Downman but engraved by Collyer, while Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire, drawn by Downman and engraved by Bartolozzi, completes the series, all of which were executed for the theatre of Richmond House. A Psyche engraved by J. H. Myer after Höppner afforded a rare idea of the brilliancy and charm of stipple. Lady Charlotte Greville, engraved by J. Young after Höppner, was another of the unusual offerings of this collection.

Among the larger prints "Crossing the Brook," engraved by W. Say after painting by H. Thompson, was wonderful for its grace

and vigor of line and the charming poise of the beautiful mother who assists her lovely child across the stepping stones. Two companion pictures, "A Visit to Grandfather," painted by Smith and engraved by Northcote, and "A Visit to Grandmother," painted by Northcote and engraved by Smith, displayed a beautiful balance of composition and a pretty contrast of a handsome matron and charming children with fine types of dignified old age.

Some of these prints, like those just mentioned, have a very strong illustrative quality, having very evidently been executed for the purpose of telling a story. Point is often given to the tale by quaint verses in the margin, verses which speak volumes concerning the manners and customs of the day. Of this type are two companion pictures titled pedantically first in English and then in French "Attention—L'attention" and "Inattention—L'innattention." In the last mentioned picture an elderly dame in a dressing gown and cap is reading to a slumbering miss with golden curls, white muslin and blue ribbon of romantic traditions. The verse beneath is as follows:

"Read 'Fox's Martyrs' to sixteen;
How dull, how stupid it must prove!
How it would brighten up her mien
Would Granny read her tales of love."

The companion piece shows "sweet sixteen," curls, muslins and ribbons as before, but very much awake while a handsome and graceful gallante is reading from a book marked "Ovid." Beneath it appears the appropriate verse:

"When Love's the theme, what eye can close;
The minutes steal the lightning's wings:
Adieu at once to dull repose,
For who can sleep when 'Ovid' sings!"

One cannot but smile at the quaint choice as to a book of love poems and wonder whether these young people of the past were capable of thrilling to the original language of Rome or reduce to the necessity of perusing a translation. Times have certainly changed and in nothing more than in our conceptions of what constitutes a gay time. These studies were published by Ackerman in 1802.